

REMARKS

Claims 2-4 and 6-9 are pending in the present application. Claims 2-4 and 6 are rejected. Claims 2, 3 and 6 are herein amended. No new matter has been presented.

The Examiner acknowledges that claims 7-8 and 9(7) and 9(8) are allowed. The Examiner asserts that he allows the claims because the substrate processing apparatus characterized in that a second piping is provided and connected to the middle portion of the first piping for the purpose of supplying dilution gas of the same kind of inert gas is not found in the prior art either singly or in combination.

However, the Examiner maintains his rejection of claims 2-4 and 6.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 2-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 6,294,575 to Vaartstra et al. The Examiner asserts that the claims are reasonably and broadly construed as being disclosed by Vaartstra et al.

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 5,950,328 to Ichiko et al. The Examiner asserts that the claims are reasonably and broadly construed as being disclosed by Ichiko et al.

Applicants herein thank Examiner Gravini for conducting an interview with Applicants' attorney on January 10, 2008.

In the interview, Applicants noted that in Vaartstra et al., because no heat is added after the vapor generating unit and no disclosed work is applied after that unit, the temperature throughout the thermodynamic system must decrease. Such is indicated by the Examiner in the Office Actions dated June 14, 2007 and October 22, 2007.

Applicants emphasized that in Vaartstra et al. the heat is provided only by the heated inert gas heading into the vapor generating unit (abstract). It is the heat of the incoming inert gas that is used to vaporize the solvent to form a vapor. Since no heat is added after the vapor generating unit of Vaartstra et al., the temperature profile can not be $T_1 \leq T_2 \leq T_3$, but will be $T_1 \geq T_2 \geq T_3$, because the heat will be lost along the pathway.

On the other hand, Applicants noted that the present claims require a dry gas being a mixture of an inert gas that is bubbled through an organic solvent at temperature T_1 to pick up solvent mist thus forming a dry gas, the dry gas being heated to a (higher) temperature T_2 and sent to a jet for ejecting the dry gas, and ejecting the gas at (a still higher) temperature T_3 toward a substrate. The temperatures satisfy $T_1 \leq T_2 \leq T_3$, with T_3 being less than or equal to the boiling point of the organic solvent. Such temperatures ensure that the dry gas will contain micro-sized mist particles that will condense on the substrate and thereby displace a maximum amount of water from the substrate.

Upon Applicants' explanation, the Examiner indicated that he understood the differences between Vaartstra et al. and the present claims. The Examiner indicated that the confusion arose from the wording of the claims, because it is not clear where the additional heat comes from in the flow path of the present invention.

Applicants discussed possible amendments to clarify the claim. The Examiner agreed that the presently submitted amendments would render the claims allowable.

In order to have the above amendments entered and considered, Applicants submit the present amendments with a Request for Continued Examination (RCE). The Examiner indicated that such RCE with the present amendment would result in a first action allowance.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, Applicants submit that the claims, as herein amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicants request such action at an early date.

If the Examiner believes that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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